DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 189 080 SP 016 296

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TITLE The Prestigious College Football Coach: An Analysis of Sponsored Career Mobility.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 18p.: Manuscript prepared for delivery at the National Convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (Detroit, MI, April 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Athletes: *Athletic Coaches: *Career Ladders: *Employment Potential: Employment Qualifications: *Football: Higher Education: *Occupational Mobility: Promotion (Occupational)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of sponsored career mobility among the head football coaches at America's most prestigious football institutions. A group of the 30 most prestigious football programs from 709 four-year institutions were selected. Each institution supplied a "press guide," containing career pattern data about each of the football coaches. Data produced by the analysis is presented in the form of descriptive statistics and pertains to experienced playing position centrality, classification of alma mater, first professional position, first head coaching position, and immediate prior professional position. The advantages of sponsored careers through the affiliation of prestigious football universities was found to be clearly unmistakable, regardless of the type of affiliation. (Author/CJ)

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THE PRESTIGIOUS COLLEGE FOOTBALL COACH: AN ANALYSIS OF SPONSORED CAREER MOBILITY

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MANUSCRIPT PREPARED FOR DELIVERY AT THE NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND DANCE, APRIL, 1980

Detroit, Michigan

SP 016 296

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of sponsored career mobility among the head football coaches at America's most prestigious football institutions. From the 709 four-year institutions in the United States that featured intercollegiate football during the 1978 season, a group of the 30 most prestigious was established. Each of the prestigious institutions supplied the researcher with a copy of their 1978 "press guide." Each "press guide" produced all of the career pattern data used to determine the extent of career sponsorship for each head coach. Data produced by the analysis is presented in the form of descriptive statistics, and pertains to experienced playing position centrality, classification of alma mater, first professional position, first head coaching position, and immediate prior professional position. Findings supported, and in some instances strengthened, earlier career pattern research by Loy and Sage (1978), Andrews (1979), Massengale (1980), and Massengale and Farrington (1977). The advantages of sponsored careers through the affiliation of prestigious football universities was found to be clearly unmistakable, particularly among prestigious universities, regardless of whether the affiliation was a player, a first professional position, a first head coaching position, or an immediate prior position. Experienced playing position centrality was also found to be an influencial sponsoring factor.

THE PRESTIGIOUS COLLEGE FOOTBALL COACH: AN ANALYSIS OF SPONSORED CAREER MOBILITY

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This investigation will not address itself to the entire concept of career pattern, instead it will attempt to analyze and describe specific aspects of sponsored career mobility among the head football coaches at 30 of America's most successful and prestigious football institutions.

Sponsored career mobility, as contrasted to contest career mobility, within an educational setting, was thoroughly defined, analyzed, and explained in the classic study by Turner (1960). Generally, sponsored career mobility is being placed near the top, or into a position that features a high probability of immediate success, without having to first prove your rightful place or position, and most often this status is accomplished with the aid and assistance of influential professional people or organizations. On the other hand, contest career mobility is working your way up the ladder of success, or starting at the bottom and proving that your rightful place or position is at the top, without the aid or assistance of influential professional people or organizations.

In the case of the college head football coach, sponsored career mobility could hypothetically consist of playing a central position at a prestigious football institution, becoming a graduate assistant at that institution or a similar institution, then becoming an assistant coach at a name school, and finally becoming the head coach at a major university that normally features an impressive win/loss record. At the same time, contest career mobility for the football coach could consist of having played at an insignificant small college, becoming a highly successful football coach at a small high school,

securing an assistant coaching position at an insignificant college, then becoming the highly successful head football coach at that same insignificant college, and finally becoming the head coach at a major university due to what many may view as unbelievable success in terms of a win/loss record.

In their recent career pattern research involving collegiate head football and basketball coaches, Loy and Sage (1978) found a definite indication of a working process of sponsored career mobility. In a similar study, Andrews (1979) found that sponsorship among college football coaches did exist, with institutional prestige and conference prestige being the influential factors. Another attempt at establishing sponsored career patterns for college football coaches used various levels of institutional prestige as the influencing factor (Massengale, 1980), and found that the tendency of football coaches to become head coaches at institutions of a similar type to their own alma maters was unmistakable. The influence of social interaction resulting from structural organizations as determined by experienced playing position centrality, has also been established as a possible influence on the sponsorship of college football coaches' careers (Massengale & Farrington, 1977).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of sponsored career mobility among the head football coaches at 30 of America's most prestigious football institutions, by answering the following questions.

1. To what extent was experienced playing position centrality represented among the head football coaches?

2. To what extent were the head football coaches graduates of small colleges, major universities, or prestigious football universities?

3. To what extent did the head football coaches secure their first coaching positions at high schools, small colleges, major universities, or prestigious football universities.

4. To what extent did the head football coaches secure their first head college football coaching positions at small college, major universities, or prestigious football universities?

5. To what extent did the head football coaches hold positions at small colleges, major universities, or prestigious football institutions, immediately prior to their current positions?

Procedure

During the 1978 football season there were 709 four-year institutions in the United States that featured intercollegiate football, of which 176 were classified by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) as Division 1-A or 1-AA. Division 1-A and 1-AA members are those institutions with football teams that are commonly referred to as "big time" or "major university." For purposes of this study the NCAA classification was used as a definition of major university football, with all other institutions being classified as small college.

Within the major university classification a group of prestigious football universities was established by compiling a rank order list, according to the frequency since 1945, that an institution's football team finished the season nationally ranked among the top 10 teams by the Associated Press and/or United Press International. The data used to establish a group of 30 prestige football institutions is presented in Table I

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Table I about here

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After the 30 most prestigious football institutions were established, each of the 30 was asked to supply the researcher with a copy of their 1978 "press guide" or "media guide." Press guides were secured from all 30 institutions, with each press guide containing the biographical profile of

the head coach. A content analysis was then conducted on each biographical profile, which produced all of the data that is presented in the form of descriptive statistics in this study.

Analysis and Discussion

The experienced playing position centrality of each coach was established by determining his collegiate playing position, and then classifying that position as being central or peripheral, according to the operational definition originally offered by Loy and McElvogue (1970). An example of the operational definition of centrality applied to typical modern football offensive and defensive alignments is presented in Figure 1.

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Figure 1 about here

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The press guides contained biographical profiles for all head coaches, which provided useable data pertaining to experienced playing position centrality for 28 of the 30 head coaches. Of the 28 coaches, 16 (57%) were found to have played collegiate football in central positions, while 12 (43%) were found to have played peripheral positions. Data regarding experienced playing position centrality is presented in Table 2.

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Table 2 about here

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Although the majority of coaches representing experienced centrality is small (57%), it should be noted that central positions will seldom occupy more than 36% of the available football playing positions, and normally the percentage will be much smaller. Only 4 of the 11 offensive position are considered to be central, and a defense that places more than 4 of the 11

players in central positions is extremely rare. In other words, a minority of the available football playing positions is supplying the majority of prestigious college football coaches.

An examination of the coaches' alma maters revealed a strong tendency for prestigious universities to hire head football coaches who were graduates of institutions of a similar type to their own. Only 4 (13%) of the 30 coaches were graduates of small colleges, while 11 (37%) were graduates of major universities, and 15 (50 %) were graduates of prestigious universities. Data regarding coaches' alma maters is presented in Table 3.

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Table 3 about here

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This career pattern tendency receives additional strength, when the number and classification of football playing colleges and universities is considered. During the 1978 season there were 709 four-year institutions featuring intercollegiate football, of which 176 were classified as major universities, with 30 of the major universities being classified as prestigious universities for purposes of this study. The data indicated that 176 (25%) of the 709 football playing institutions have graduated 26 (87%) of the prestigious head football coaches, and that 30 (4%) of the 709 football playing institutions have graduated 15 (50%) of the prestigious head football coaches.

An examination of the coaches' first professional positions also revealed a tendency of sponsored career mobility, particularly at the prestigious university level, although only 4% of the four-year football playing institutions were classified as prestigious. Of the 30 prestigious

head coaches, 15 (50%) received their first professional position at a prestigious university, while 10 (33%) started their careers at the high school level, and became products of contest mobility to varying extents. Data pertaining to first professional position is presented in Table 4.

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Table 4 about here

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When the first head college coaching position was considered, once again career sponsorship became an evident tendency. Only 2 (7%) of the coaches received their first head coaching position at the small college level, while the remaining 28 (93%) received their first head coaching assignments at the major university or prestigious university levels. Data pertaining the the first head coaching assignments of prestigious football coaches is presented in Table 5.

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Table 5 about here

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The strongest career pattern tendency revealed in this study was related to the coaches' positions immediately prior to their current head coaching assignments. All 30 (100%) of the coaches in this study had a college position at a major university or a prestigious university immediately prior to their present position. Data regarding immediate prior positions is presented in Table 6.

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Table 6 about here

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Conslusion

Findings in this study support, and in some instances strengthen, earlier findings by Loy and Sage (1978), Andrews (1979), Massengale (1980), and Massengale and Farrington (1977). Contest career mobility and sponsored career mobility are both evident in the career patterns of prestigious college head football coaches. However, the advantages of sponsored careers through the affiliation of prestigious football universities is clearly unmistakable, particularly among prestigious universities, regardless of whether the affilitation was a player, a first professional position, a first head coaching position, or as an immediate prior position. Experienced playing position, or as an immediate prior position. Experienced playing position centrality also appeared to be an influential factor in the sponsorship of the prestigious head football coach.

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TABLE I

30 Top Nationally Ranked Teams Since 1945

#	Institution	#	Institution	#	Institution
22	Oklahoma	12	Arkansas	5	Navy
21	Notre Dame	11	L.S.U.	5	Wisconsin
20	Alabama	11	Tennessee	5	Minnesota
18	Michigan	10	Mississippi	5	Iowa
17	Ohio State	10	U.C.L.A.	4	T.C.U.
16	Texas	7	Auburn	4	Rice
13	Michigan State	7	Georgia	4	Illinois
13	U.S.C.	7	Army	4	Missouri
13	Nebraska	7	Georgia Tech	4	North Carolina
13	Penn State	5	Maryland	4	Miami

Others receiving ranking were (3) Houston, Syracuse, Pittsburg, Washington, Oregon State, Southern Methodist, Texas A & M, California, Stanford, Purdue, (2) Pennsylvania, Colorado, Clemson, Kansas, Arizona, Princeton, Indiana, Kentucky, Arizona State, (1) Pacific, Texas Tech, Air Force, Oregon, West Virginia, Oklahoma State, Baylor, Duke, Wyoming, St. Mary's, Utah State, and Northwestern.

TABLE 2

Central and Peripheral Playing Position Experience

of Prestigious College Football Coaches

Central		Peripheral	
N	%	N	%
16	57	12	43

TABLE 3

Head Football Coaches and Their Alma Maters

Small College		Major University		Prestigious University	
N	%	N	%	N	%
4	13	11	37	15	50

TABLE 4

First Professional Position of Prestigious Head Football Coaches

High School		Small College		Major University		Prestigious University	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
10	.33	2	7	3	10	15	20

TABLE 5

First Head College Coaching Position

Small College		Major University		Prestigious University	
N	%	N	%	N	%
2	7	16	53	12	40

TABLE 6

College Coaching Position Immediately Prior to Present Position

Small College		Major University		Prestigious University	
N	%	N	%	N	%
0	0	14	47	16	53

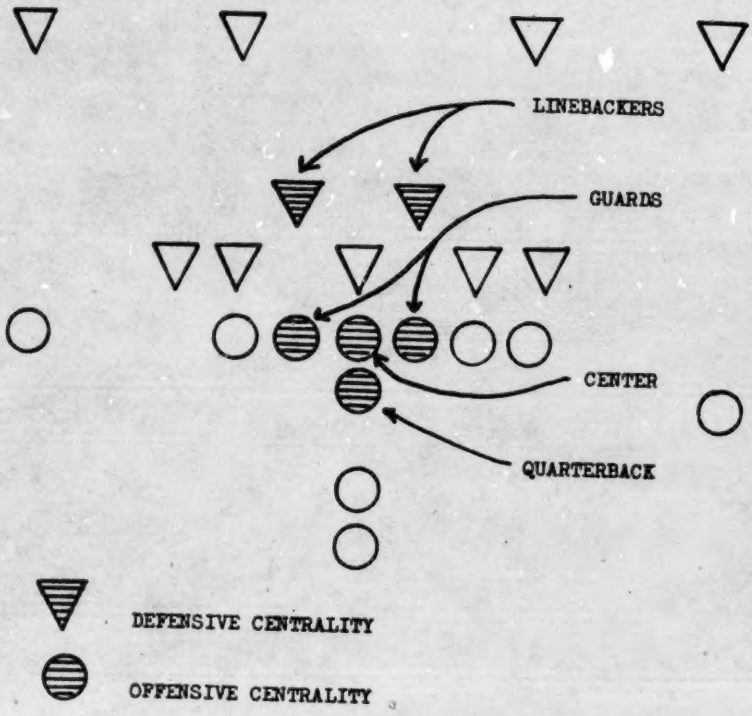

FIGURE I

Operational Definition of Centrality Applied to Typical Modern Football Offensive and Defensive Alignments